

Heritage Schools, Inc. 5600 North Heritage School Drive Provo, Utah 84604

July 18, 2007





Utah State Office of Education 250 East 500 South P.O. Box 144200 Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200

THE REPORT OF THE VISITING TEAM REVIEWING

Heritage Schools, Inc. 5600 North Heritage School Drive Provo, Utah 84604

July 18, 2007

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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State Superintendent of Public Instruction

DIVISION OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SCHOOL SUCCESS

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FOREWORD

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase student achievement.

In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes. It is a three-phased evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, July 18, 2007, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of Heritage Schools, Inc. is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the visiting team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Benjamin Parker is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Heritage Schools, Inc., and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more dramatically increase student achievement at Heritage Schools, Inc.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D. State Superintendent of Public Instruction

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HERITAGE SCHOOLS, INC.

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School Administration

Mike Fullmer	
Benjamin Parker	Director of Education
3	Therapeutic and Recreation Director

School Office Management

Susanne Nelson	Academic Secretary
Judy Sorenson	Registrar
Georgia Rhodes	C

Academic Advisors/School Counselors

Donny Atuia	Brad Chatterly	Robin Reid
Cristina Atherly	Stacy Crandall	Jeanette Rasmussen
Cindly Barlow	Matthew Lewis	Miriam Woltjen

Faculty

Christina Atherly	Paige MacKay	Robin Reid
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Charami Boyter	Gail Parker	Kayla Tersigni
Stacy Crandall	Sally Pender	Mirium Woltjen
Nila Johnson	Jon Portie	
Matt Lewis	Jeanette Rasmussen	

HERITAGE SCHOOLS, INC.

MISSION STATEMENT

We value:

- Caring The young person's needs come first. Staff is expected to be nurturing, caring and sensitive in developing healthy life experiences for all of our young people. We attempt to be sensitive to individual needs and build treatment upon the young person's strengths.
- Collaboration We seek to form strong linkages to parents and families and to preserve the center's commitment to develop the whole person spiritually, morally, academically and physically. It takes a true miracle of the heart, a conversion from the inside out, to turn lives around and to heal grief, pain and violation. Fostering spiritual growth is a keystone of the Heritage Center.
- Accountability We are committed to being accessible and accountable to
 parents, students, community and funding agencies, and to provide quality
 programs designed to develop responsible, productive, and creative and selfsufficient individuals capable of sustaining and improving society now and in the
 future.
- Support We seek to provide a physically and emotionally safe environment where all persons are treated in an ethical manner, with dignity and respect.

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Ted P. Lovato, Accreditation Consultant, Utah State Office of Education, Visiting Team Chairperson

Georgia Loutensock, Education Specialist, Accreditation, Utah State Office of Education

VISITING TEAM REPORT

HERITAGE SCHOOLS, INC.

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Heritage Schools, Inc. is a junior and senior high school in conjunction with Heritage Residential Center begun in 1984. Heritage Residential Center's mission is to render the highest quality of residential care and services to students, restoring them to maximally adaptive, social, and emotional functioning. Undergirding this purpose is a commitment to the maintenance and strengthening of families whenever possible.

Heritage Schools students work toward obtaining their high school diplomas, while learning successful living skills. School is conducted year-round, with three semesters lasting 16 weeks each. Students are enrolled in classes according to their credit needs, with consideration for their academic levels.

Enrollment at Heritage Schools in July of 2007 was 158. The facility currently has room for 165. Male and female students attend school separately. Students are in the classroom six hours per day, five days a week, and spend one hour each day in a supervised and tutored study hall.

The average stay for this diverse student population is 13 months.

a) What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?

One of the key findings of the self-study is that the Heritage Schools students, though academically deficient at entrance, put a high value on their education, and that they feel that they get the attention and assistance they need to reach their academic goals. Student surveys show a high rate of positive feedback for the school staff.

The average grades of the students at Heritage have shown an increase and then a leveling off over the past three years, according to research conducted for the self-study. ACT scores, PSAT scores, and SAT scores show an increase, though slight, in overall assessment data collected.

b) What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?

Belief statements could not be found in the self-study, which the Visiting Team found to be a critically missing element.

More information on the educational staff needed to be shown in the self-study.

Although mention is made of a student council in the student survey, the self-study gave no further information about the student government and the role it plays in the decision-making process.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

- A system to develop realistic and viable belief statements needs to be developed. Belief statements reflect direction and responsibilities for educators, students, the learning environment, and the community at large.
- A system or program to promote more effective communication between the academic departments and the medical staff is encouraged.

CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

a) To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?

It is apparent that all faculty members were included in the school improvement process with respect to student learning. After reviewing the needs of the students, the faculty was consulted, by the school improvement committee, as to the most appropriate goals for the students, staff, and parents.

The school improvement committee has worked collaboratively by department and in individual curriculum areas. The report listed certain areas that most or all Heritage students struggle with, then analyzed the information in the school profile. This allowed the committee to better understand how to approach the goals and meet the students' varying needs.

b) To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?

The self-study reflected school needs quite clearly. There was a general consensus, based on information and data collected from all stakeholders, that a need existed for improvement in study skills and general academic knowledge across all subjects, especially mathematics.

CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Heritage School's desired results for student learning are as follows:

- DRSL 1: **Improved Task Management and Improved Study Skills** Students will develop self-management skills that allow them to follow through and complete classroom assignments and projects. They will also develop critical thinking skills in order to resolve challenges both academically and in social interactions with peers.
- DRSL 2: **Improvement of Math Skills** Students will develop math skills and engage in inquiry, problem-solving and higher-order thinking that allow them opportunities for the authentic application of math knowledge and math skills. Math skills will be taught with respect for differences in learning styles, learning rates, and individual capabilities, without losing sight of the common goals.
- DRSL 3: **Improvement of Broad Academic Knowledge** Students are taught standards of learning that are essential for daily life. These are ideas, concepts, and skills that provide a foundation on which subsequent learning may be built. Students will be able to make connections of learned content in different subject areas and be able to solve problems in a variety of different ways.

Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:

- a) To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?
 - The mission statement defines a compelling purpose and direction for school goals, and it is obvious to the Visiting Team that the school facilitated a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school.
- b) To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?
 - The Visiting Team was disappointed that belief statements were not included in the self-study. Belief statements reflect direction and responsibilities for all students and the community at large.
- c) To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?
 - The school's mission aligns with and supports the desired results for student

learning (DRSLs) in most categories. The mission is consistent with identified DRSLs. Belief statements need to be developed and celebrated.

Curriculum Development:

a) To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?

The staff works collaboratively in offering courses in the Utah Core Curriculum as well as foreign languages; dramatic, visual, and performing arts; technology; and vocational preparation. The courses follow the Utah State curriculum guidelines.

b) To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?

The development of the DRSLs was a collaborative effort by the educational staff at Heritage. It was led by the School Improvement Committee. Using surveys of all stakeholders, the faculty became aware of what was occurring throughout the school. Therefore, the faculty understood the DRSLs, their relationship to the mission, and in the interaction of the DRSLs with the various departments. It was apparent to the Visiting Team that the academic leader is a strong advocate of the DRSLs and promotes them whenever possible. The DRSLs were a very important part of the schools' self-study.

Quality Instructional Design:

a) To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?

The faculty meets monthly to discuss strategies for teaching various skills and meeting the goals of the three well-thought-out action plans: (1) Teachers discuss research-based instruction and methods to effectively teach students. (2) Students will receive guidance on a one-to-one basis on how to approach seemingly overwhelming academic goals. (3) The staff will monitor and record progress logs and keep records on the individual progress of every student.

b) To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?

The Heritage Schools staff is committed to meeting the educational needs of a diverse and challenging student population while still adhering to the school

mission. Multiple instructional strategies are used – strategies that recognize individual learning styles, require higher-level thinking processes, and actively engage students as active learners, and thus self-directed learners. Action Plan #3, "Student Learning – Expanding and Integrating Knowledge," is an excellent, well-thought-out plan, and the staff should be commended for the strong efforts directed toward carrying out this plan.

c) To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?

Heritage offers programs at varied times to accommodate individual student need and schedules. There are abundant opportunities designed for students to enrich their total experience while attending Heritage School. Student recreation is important to the leadership of the school, and resources are expended to provide a wide variety of recreation opportunities for the students.

Quality Assessment Systems:

a) To what extent has the staff developed classroom or school-wide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?

School-wide and classroom assessment is a critical component of Heritage Schools expectations for student achievement. Methods of assessment include entry-level measurement, pre- and post-testing, assessing regular class assignments, quizzes and tests in the classroom, direct teacher observation, varied group discussions, projects and presentations, etc.

b) To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?

The school staff works on using varied assessment approaches to determine student knowledge, skills, and competencies over the time students attend Heritage. Strategies used to assess gains in student competency and growth include those stated above. Student grade equivalency monitoring, curriculum-based assessments, individual math grades, average grades of students, etc., are also useful to measure competency and growth in mathematics.

c) To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?

Through collaboration and administrative incentives, teachers develop a broad range of student assessment strategies with fairness and equality in mind. Students know prior to each course what evaluation criteria look like.

Leadership for School Improvement:

a) To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?

Teachers and administrators meet often to discuss student improvement and academic instruction. The academic leader is committed to fostering an academic climate that supports teacher instruction and student learning. Heritage Schools' educational curriculum is consistent with Heritage Residential Center's mission and services in empowering the whole child academically, therapeutically, and socially.

b) To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?

When a student enters Heritage School, he/she is assigned an academic advisor, whom he/she meets one on one to assess his/her past academic achievements and shortcomings, and to set future academic goals. In collaboration with the student's parents, the director, academic advisor and the student form a personalized schedule and plan. When available, past school assessment data is utilized in forming the plan.

c) To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?

The school's academic leadership is committed to monitoring entering and ongoing data in an effort to monitor student achievement and personal growth. Students have the opportunity to take the PSAT, SAT, and/or ACT. Over the past two years, data show that participation with these tests has risen by nine percent. All Heritage scores on these national measures fall within the average range.

The average grade point average of Heritage students has shown an increase, but the data shows a slight leveling off over the past three years. Student grading in all content areas is based on a variety of assessments that include formal tests, written assignments, demonstrations, visual projects, and oral presentations.

Students must be enrolled in a minimum of two core academic subjects, although most students choose to have more in their schedule.

d) To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?

Heritage Schools, Inc. has been around a long time (it was begun in 1984), and thus has become very competent in offering a wide array of services for a very

diverse student population. Not only does Heritage offer services that empower the whole child academically, therapeutically, and socially, but the school also uses resources to create a safe, efficient, physical environment.

e) To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLs, and school improvement efforts?

It was apparent to the Visiting Team that Heritage Schools, Inc. has ample resources being utilized in achieving school goals, the DRSLs, and overall school improvement. More effort needs to be used to acculturate the students with the DRSLs, however.

f) To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?

The Visiting Team was impressed with the leadership provided by the school improvement team. Teachers are involved in the action plans, and there seems to be a feeling of overall ownership of the educational philosophy of Heritage. It is evident that the Heritage Schools staff is dedicated to using its school improvement plan to make appropriate decisions that align with the school's vision to support students in becoming productive citizens.

Community Building:

a) To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?

Due to the fact that Heritage is a residential program, personal access to parents/guardians is not as convenient as at a regular public high school. The academic director explained that much effort is expended to communicate with students' homes. The Visiting Team was discouraged to see that parent contact data and input was not shown in the self-study.

It is obvious that collaboration among the teaching staff and with the administration is strong and noticeable, but it seems as if student input into the decision-making process is not very evident in the self-study. The student survey did show a high degree of satisfaction with the school, however.

b) To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?

According to the school director, meetings with parents/guardians are important to Heritage staff, and resources are used to accommodate communication efforts

with all parents/guardians. The Visiting Team found no evidence of this in the self-study data, and it should be included in future self-studies.

Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:

- a) To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?
 - While it is obvious that the school community has engaged in a collaborative self-study process in an effort to improve all aspects of the academic environment, there is little evidence in the self-study of the opportunities teachers have for professional development.
- b) To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?

It is evident to the Visiting Team that the faculty and staff, due to their caring for students and their education, are the major contributors to this school's success. Staff collaboration is strong and vital, and under strong leadership it is apparent that the School Improvement Plan's goal is to reach 100 percent program completion for students enrolled in the program. This entails the students' fulfilling school requirements and therapeutic progress in such a fashion that they will be able to succeed when they return to their homes.

The Visiting Team believes that the three DRSLs researched and selected are highly commendable and will lead to many students being successful.

CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) STANDARDS I-XI

The Heritage School is in compliance with all NAAS standards for accreditation. Over the years, the school has worked diligently to maintain the accreditation standards as outlined by the NAAS and the Utah State Office of Education. The school's curriculum is aligned with the Utah State Core Curriculum. All professional educators are properly licensed and endorsed for their particular assignments, in accordance with Utah state requirements. The school is financially viable and ethical in its business practices. The Heritage School has created and maintained a culture of continuous improvement that supports student achievement.

CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN

- a) To what extent is the school-wide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?
 - The school-wide action plan is very adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up.
- b) To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, school-wide and system-wide?
 - Much evidence shows that staff collaboration and a feeling of ownership of school goals exist at Heritage.
- c) How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the school-wide action plan appear to be?

The action plan has been a work in progress. The faculty and Director of Education have been instrumental in solidifying its ideas and coming up with the resources needed to achieve each goal through the action plans. Each week in faculty meetings the action plan was reviewed so that all teachers, classroom aides, substitutes, and members of other campus departments were aware of the progress being made.

The action steps, timelines, resources, and person(s) responsible for reaching all goals are clearly defined; thus, the monitoring of the accomplishments of the school-wide action plan will surely be successful.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The staff of Heritage Schools, Inc. (Heritage) is to be commended for the caring they exhibit with all students enrolled.
- Heritage is to be commended for a high level of student satisfaction with their education at the school.
- Heritage is to be commended for its strong commitment to maintain and strengthen families so that students may see lifelong success.

- Heritage is to be commended for the high degree of collaboration among staff members in the development of the School Improvement Plan, a quality and workable plan that is clear and concise.
- The owners and leadership of Heritage are to be commended for providing the resources for students to experience a quality education experience.
- The owners and leadership of Heritage are to be commended for providing the students with an attractive and functional campus.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that the staff at Heritage Schools, Inc. develop a set of belief statements in order to clarify school improvement efforts and goals and continue the overall academic growth of the school. The Visiting Team believes that belief statements are critical in reflecting direction and responsibilities for educators, students, the learning environment, and the community at large.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the student government structure, its members' responsibilities, and that their role in the decision-making process be better outlined in future self-studies.
- The Visiting Team recommends that every effort be made to have a highly qualified librarian to oversee the operation of a quality library/media operation.
- The Visiting Team recommends that regular intra-departmental communication exist to assist in consistent implementation of instruction in all curriculum areas.
- The Visiting Team recommends that opportunities for teacher professional development be made known to all staff members, and that information on professional development be included in future self-studies.
- The Visiting Team recommends that all educators be made aware of critical state and graduation requirements.
- The Visiting Team recommends that a clearly stated sequence of academic courses, according to grade level, be required.